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The Use of Public Health Databases to Estimate the Risk for Special Education Placement

by

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study examines risk factors associated with placement in special education in the first grade. The purpose is to help identify children in need of early intervention services.

Methods: Records for children enrolled in first-grade special education on December 1, 1998 were linked to birth certificate records for 1990, 1991, and 1992. Child Service Coordination (CSC) records were also linked to identify the children who received CSC services and the associated risk conditions.

Results: Children were more likely to receive special education services if they were low birth weight, low gestational age, had a low Apgar score or a congenital anomaly, or were part of a multiple birth. Familial factors that increased the odds of special education placement were low parental education, less than adequate prenatal care, maternal smoking during pregnancy, and parental/familial limitations such as difficulty in parent-infant bonding or limited social skills.

Conclusions: By considering both environmental/familial and child-level factors, we can better ensure that at-risk children are identified and referred for early intervention services.

Note about the Authors: Sandra Cluett Redden was an Assistant Professor at the Clinical Center for Development and Learning at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill at the time of this work. She is presently a Staff Psychologist at Glenwood Mental Health Center in Birmingham, Alabama. Donna Scandlin is Project Director with the North Carolina Office on Disability and Health and the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina. Marcia Roth is a Program Manager with the North Carolina Office on Disability and Health and the Women's and Children's Health Section of the North Carolina Division of Public Health. Judith Devine was at the State Center for Health Statistics at the time of this work and is now a Research and Evaluation Specialist with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in Portland, Oregon. Paul Buescher works at the State Center for Health Statistics.



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